



NAVAJO NATION HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

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U.N. Official & Navajo Nation President address Navajo Human Rights at U.N. Human Rights Council

View a recorded web cast

ST. MICHAELS, Ariz.—The Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission’s and Diné Hataalii’s request to a U.N. official was finally addressed and heard on the floor at the United Nations in Geneva today. Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly sent a resounding message to the U.N. Human Rights Council.

The U.N. Human Rights Council was established in March 2006 within the United Nations system, where 47 member-states are responsible for “strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights” around the world, according the U.N. Human Rights Council web site, and “The main purpose of the U.N. Human Rights Council is to address situations of human rights violations and make recommendations.”

“Navajo people are a part of the world community and the world community has set standards for a good reason,” said Leonard Gorman for the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission in a previous press release and continued, “The United States must be responsible and abide by international standards that protect the human rights of Navajos.”

The Navajo Nation’s request initiated about 15 months ago when the Navajo Nation’s legislative entity to protect Navajo human rights, NNHRC, together with the Diné Hataalii Association, the Diné Medicine Man Association, and the Azee’ Bee Nahagha of Diné Nation communicated with S. James Anaya, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, regarding the desecration of the San Francisco Peaks [Dook’o’osliid], and the violation of Navajo human rights. The request followed the Navajo Nation’s formal protocols and on May 17, 2010, the 21st Navajo Nation Council authorized the formal communiqué to Anaya.

On December 2, 2008, the first NNHRC public hearing, Lloyd Thompson of the Diné Hataalii Association testified to NNHRC Commissioners and said in Navajo [transcribed to English], “we are involved in the discussions opposing the use of waste water of produce snow for skiing on the sacred mountain [Dook’o’osliid], according to the NNHRC 2008 – 2009 Assessing Race Relations Between Navajos and Non-Navajos: Testimonies from Navajo Citizens.

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Thompson continued and said,

“The federal government has now opposed our human rights and its trust responsibilities; while they had stated to help us, they are working against us instead. This is the present state of our efforts.

I wonder what your thoughts are as the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission regarding this issue. ...

I wonder if the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission can assist our organization with a position statement which can be delivered to the federal government. ...

We have been advocating for this issue since 1977-78.”

After Thompson completed his testimonial, NNHRC Chairperson thanked him and said, “Your statements are appropriate and in line.”

Today, Anaya shared his report with the U.N. Human Rights Council and recommended that the U.S. President suspend the permit authorizing the use of reclaimed water on Dook’o’osliid [San Francisco Peaks], the sacred mountain to the west marking the traditional boundary of the Navajo people—the Diné.

Anaya’s report (A/HRC/18/35/Add.1) to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland was released to the public on August 22, 2011. To download it, visit the NNHRC web site at www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov or “Google” the reference number, A/HRC/18/35/Add.1.

To view a recorded web cast of Anaya and Navajo Nation President Shelly at the 18th session of the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, go to <http://www.unmultimedia.org/tv/webcast/2011/09/ilrcclustered-id-on-indigenous-peoples-19th-plenary-meeting.html>.

Leonard Gorman for NNHRC said, “Anaya’s report supports the need to not only elevate the fundamental religious rights into the international arena but importantly the necessity to ensure that United States carries out its commitments to human rights based on binding international treaties. This is a comprehensive approach to protect Dook’o’osliid.”

“Networking at the international level to advocate for recognition of Navajo human rights” is one of the purposes of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, according to the NNHRC Plan of Operation approved by Navajo Nation Council resolution CJN-15-08.

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Working with the United Nations is not unprecedented for the Navajo Nation. The Navajo Nation also supported and had an active role in the U.N. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, prior to President Obama's support of the Declaration in 2010.

Further, Navajo Nation President Shelly defended Navajo human rights when he was the Vice-President of the Navajo Nation about a 10-day beating spree against Navajo street inebriates in Grants, New Mexico. Then, the alleged perpetrators singled out Native Americans because of a recent filing for a traditional cultural property license for Mt. Taylor—Tsoodzil, the sacred mountain to the south marking the traditional boundary of the Diné. The TCP status would have disallowed uranium mining and prevented jobs in the mining industry.

To view the Navajo Nation President Shelly's statement, go to Navajo Nation Washington Office web site at: <http://nnwo.org/content/statement-honorable-ben-shelly-president-navajo-nation-18th-session-united-nations-human-rig>.

U.N. Human Rights Council report and upcoming NNHRC public hearings

To further support Anaya's report and recommendation, NNHRC urges Navajo and non-Navajo citizens to testify at a public hearing at City Hall in Flagstaff, Ariz., on Friday, September 21, 2011 at 5 p.m., about on the ground efforts in recent events in Flagstaff, the mountain community at the base of San Francisco Peaks. The events may range from media portrayal of events or lack thereof, police use of force, to what the sacred site means to individuals. Testimonials will provide up-to-date information for a report to the United States.

The purpose of the hearing is to give Navajo and non-Navajo citizens and other indigenous peoples' an opportunity to give oral testimony, written testimony to Commissioner for NNHRC about San Francisco Peaks as they relate to use, need for preservation, protection and other issues. It is open to the public.

If a willing participant cannot make the hearing, NNHRC will accept a written testimony by mail. Be sure to include your full name, date, and chronological history of events pertaining to your concern about sacred sites, also, state the problem, and state the solution you want if you have one to recommend. Send your testimony to: Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, P.O. Box 1689, Window Rock, Navajo Nation, (AZ) 86515.

For more information, call NNHRC at (928) 871-7436 or visit the NNHRC website at www.nnhrc.navajo-nsn.gov.

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On September 2, 2011, NNHRC passed a resolution, "Acknowledging the Report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, S. James Anaya, and Recommending that the Navajo Nation Council to Formally Request the President of

the United States of America to Direct the U.S. Forest Service to Suspend the Permit authorizing the use of Reclaimed Waste Water to make Artificial Snow and follow the Recommendations of the Special Rapporteur; and other recommendations” and indicates the timeline between the NNHRC and Anaya formal correspondences. The 22nd Navajo Nation Council Delegate Jonathon Nez (Shonto/Navajo Mountain/Oljado/Tsah Bii Kin) will sponsor the legislation on behalf of the Navajo Nation Human Rights Commission, date to be determined. To view the legislation (0387-11), visit www.navajonationcouncil.org/legislation.html. The public comment period for the 22nd Navajo Nation Council legislation 0387-11 will end on September 20, 2011.



From Left to Right: Joe Sarcinella, JD, Legislative Associate for the Navajo Nation Washington Office and Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly. Hon. Shelly provides testimony at the U.N. Human Rights Council to defend Navajo human rights in Geneva on September 21, 2011. Photo: United Nations Webcast on-line.